



Dec. 21, 2022



SCCF Takes the Lead in Christmas Bird Count

SCCF staff and volunteers participated in the National Audubon Society's 123rd annual Christmas Bird Count last week on Sanibel and Captiva. This year, SCCF led the citizen science effort, which has historically been organized by the Sanibel Captiva Audubon Society. A special thanks to partners at San Cap Audubon, the City of Sanibel, and the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge for assisting in this year's counts, which were made more challenging by hurricane damages and limited island access. The data collected will contribute to scientists' understanding of bird populations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

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What Can Ian's High Water Mark Data Tell Us?

High water marks provide a collective record of the highest points water reached above ground — data that may help inform emergency management and highlight which locations could benefit from extra hurricane resilience measures. SCCF scientists Carrie Schuman and Paul Julian used the data to analyze the hydrology of Hurricane Ian across Sanibel and Captiva.

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Box Turtle Found on Cape Coral & Returned Home

Last month, an SCCF-marked box turtle was found and rescued from a canal in



Cape Coral. SCCF's records indicated that the turtle was about 14 miles away from its last known location on Sanibel. How did it get there? "It's difficult to determine whether this turtle was swept away to Cape Coral by storm surge or relocated by an individual," said SCCF Wildlife Biologist Mike Mills. "We may never know, but it does highlight the importance of our mark-recapture study, as the turtle was returned to the island."

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Sea Turtle Team Celebrates End of 2022 Season

On Dec. 12, the SCCF sea turtle team celebrated a successful 2022 sea turtle nesting season at Point Ybel Brewing Company with some of this year's 85 volunteers.

The end-of-season party was originally scheduled for mid-October before Hurricane Ian delayed the gathering. The event provided an opportunity for SCCF sea turtle volunteers to catch up, share memories from the summer, and look excitedly toward next season.

In 2022, 769 loggerhead and 17 green sea turtle nests were laid, and 35,803 hatchlings emerged on Sanibel and Captiva's beaches.

"It was also a chance for the staff to show their gratitude for our amazing team of volunteers and all the time and effort they dedicate to sea turtle conservation. We couldn't do it without them," said Coastal Wildlife Director and Sea Turtle Program Coordinator Kelly Sloan. **"The strong camaraderie of our sea turtle team has been displayed in many ways throughout the months following the storm, and we're grateful to Point Ybel for providing a location for us to get together and reflect."**



Sanibel FlyFishers Sponsor Mangrove Timelapse Camera

To help evaluate mangrove recovery, the SCCF Marine Lab set up a time-lapse camera system to monitor a section of red mangroves in Tarpon Bay, located in the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Special thanks to Bob Brooks and Pete Squibb for facilitating a grant from the Sanibel Flyfishers to purchase the equipment.

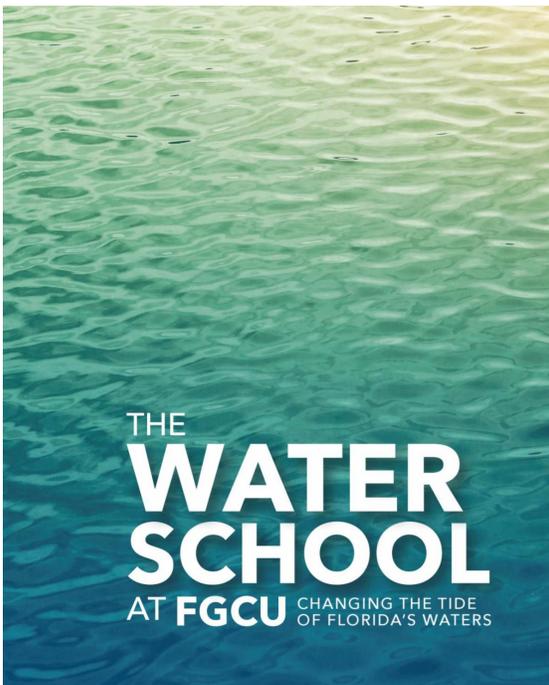
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Little Change to Water Quality; Lake O Still Too High

There has been little change to water quality over the past couple of weeks since red tide has subsided, but Lake Okeechobee is still too high for this time of year. SCCF is encouraging the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District to explore all available outlets to decrease lake levels prior to the wet season and avoid damaging discharges to the northern estuaries.

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Water School to Host Public Forum on Water Quality

The Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL) is holding a town-hall style Public Forum on Greater Estero Water Quality and Environment Actions and Solutions at The Water School at FGCU on Wednesday, Jan. 25, starting at 6 p.m.

The forum features four local experts, including SCCF Environmental Policy Director Matt DePaolis, on water and environmental issues facing Southwest Florida and the Greater Estero area. Originally scheduled for October, the panel discussion will focus on current and future threats to our community's environment, scientific information on the causes of these threats, and specific initiatives to reduce the negative impacts on local water quality.

[RSVP NOW](#)

SEEKING WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS

Thanks to Nicole Decker-McHale for sending this shot of three pond sliders (*Trachemys scripta*) taken at the Sanibel Island Golf Club.

Please [click here](#) to report your

post-lan wildlife sightings.



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